



Questions and Answers about the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) Test Variations

What are test variations?

A test variation is defined as a change in the manner in which a test is presented or administered, or in how a test taker is allowed to respond. Test variations include, but are not limited to, accommodations and modifications.

Extra time within the testing day, marking in the test booklet (e.g., use for scratch paper), and simplifying or clarifying directions are test variations for the CAHSEE that may be provided to all students.

Examples of test variations only available to students who regularly use them in the classroom include special or adaptive furniture, special lighting or acoustics, or being tested individually in a separate room.

For more test variations, accommodations, and modifications, please see the CAHSEE Title V Regulations (Article 3, sections 1215, 1215.5, 1216, and 1217) on the California Department of Education (CDE) CAHSEE Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs>.

What is an accommodation?

An accommodation is any variation in the assessment environment or process that does not fundamentally alter what the exam measures or affect the comparability of exam scores. Examples of accommodations for the CAHSEE include using a Braille transcription, having the mathematics part of the test read to the student or orally presented on a CD, or having extra time beyond the school day to complete the exam.

What is a modification?

A modification is any variation in the assessment environment or process that fundamentally alters what the exam measures or affects the comparability of exam scores. Examples of modifications for the CAHSEE include using a calculator on the math part of the exam, having the English-language arts part of the exam read to the student or orally presented on a CD, or using Manually Coded English or American Sign Language to present the test questions to the student.

What accommodations and modifications can students use to take the CAHSEE?

Students must be allowed to take the CAHSEE with any accommodations and modifications that are specified in their Individualized Education Program or Section 504 Plan for use on the CAHSEE, standardized testing, or for use during classroom instruction and assessment. In July 2004, *Matrix of Test Variations, Accommodations, and Modifications for Administration of California Statewide Assessments* will be posted to the CDE CAHSEE Web site. If a student wishes to use a test variation that is not specified in the regulations, the school district may file a request for review of proposed examination variations. This process is also described in Section 1218 of the CAHSEE Title V Regulations.

Can a student receive a high school diploma if an accommodation or modification is used to take the CAHSEE?

Passing the CAHSEE is one state requirement for graduation. There are other state requirements, and

there may be local requirements. If a student takes one or both parts of the CAHSEE with an **accommodation** and earns a score of 350 or higher, then the student has passed that part of the exam. As long as all other graduation requirements have been met, the student is eligible to receive a high school diploma.

If a student takes one or both parts of the CAHSEE with a **modification** and has received the equivalent of a passing score, the student has not passed that part of the exam, but is eligible to request a waiver of the requirement to successfully pass that part of the exam. Because the use of a modification changes what the test is measuring, the score report will be marked “not valid” for the applicable part of the exam. If the waiver is granted, and all other graduation requirements have been met, then the student is eligible to receive a high school diploma.

What is the waiver process, and who is eligible for it?

Education Code Section 60851(c) explains the waiver process in detail, and it is summarized here. Students who take one or both parts of the CAHSEE with a modification and have received the equivalent of a passing score are eligible for the waiver request process. At the request of the student’s parent or guardian, a school principal must submit to the local school governing board a request for a waiver of the requirement to pass the part(s) of the CAHSEE on which a modification was used and the equivalent of a passing score was earned. For the local board to waive the CAHSEE requirement, the principal must certify to the local board that the pupil has all of the following:

“(1) An individualized education program adopted pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) or a plan adopted pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sec. 794(a)) in place that requires the accommodations or modifications to be provided to the pupil when taking the high school exit examination.

(2) Sufficient high school level coursework either satisfactorily completed or in progress in a high school level curriculum sufficient to have attained the skills and knowledge otherwise needed to pass the high school exit examination.

(3) An individual score report for the pupil showing that the pupil has received the equivalent of a passing score on the high school exit examination while using a modification that fundamentally alters what the high school exit examination measures as determined by the State Board of Education.”

Are test variations available for English learners?

Yes. Test variations are available to English learners who regularly use them in the classroom. Examples include being tested in a separate room with other English learners, additional supervised breaks, extra time within the testing day, English-to-primary language or primary language-to-English translation glossaries, or allowing students to hear a translated version of the test directions and to ask clarifying questions in their primary language. In July 2004, the *Matrix of Test Variations for Administration of California Statewide Assessments to English Learners* will be posted to the CDE CAHSEE Web site.